

Headquarters Military Traffic Management Command

News Release

MTMC Command Affairs Office

200 Stovall St., Room 11N57

Alexandria, VA 22332

Voice (703) 428-2464 e-mail: randtj@mtmc.army.mil

For more information, contact: John Randt



No. 036-2001

March 13, 2001

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Traffic safety

TEA engineers pack big punch in short visit

Richard Sumrak puts a lot of work into a little bit of time.

Sumrak's main job these days is to evaluate highway safety at military installations across the country.

A member of MTMC's Transportation Engineering Agency, Sumrak arrives at an installation on Sunday – in order to make a prompt start on Monday morning. He has to work fast – but, he absolutely has to be accurate. Depending on what he finds and what he recommends – lives may be at stake.

By Friday, he has to have a draft report prepared and provide a briefing to the installation commander.

“For a highway engineer, this is rewarding work,” says Sumrak.

“The focus is on low-cost solutions for high crash locations.”

It is called the Crash Location Enhancement Study Program. Simply, the Federal Highway Administration makes funding available to the Newport News, Va., agency to offer free highway safety studies to Department of Defense installations that qualify for them.

Results of the work are impressive:

- At Fort Drum, N.Y., the grading at 12 railroad highway crossings have been improved.
- At Fort Bragg, N.C., traffic flow safety improvements have been made.
- At Camp Lejeune, N.C., recommended improvements at a half dozen intersections have been implemented resulting in improved traffic operations and safety.

After recent reviews at Fort Stewart and Fort Benning, in Georgia, the state highway department committed \$700,000 for new signs and a completely new intersection design.

“We found they had 1970s-era (traffic) signs,” said Sumrak.

Several years ago, a Transportation Engineering Agency team studied traffic safety outside the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, Calif., where warfighter deployments exceeded the capacity of the existing road grid.

Recommendations led to changes.

“They do make changes,” said Sumrak.

When Sumrak, or his partner Richard Quesenberry, go on the road it is as part of a two-member government/contractor team. Typically, Sumrak or Quesenberry are teamed with a contract engineer familiar with the study process.

When the team arrives, they carry all the equipment they need to make them self-sufficient: electronic traffic counters, two laptops, one printer and a digital camera.

Why two laptops?

The team uses one to research highway safety standards.

As findings are made, the team uses the second laptop to begin writing a draft report. Key areas of analysis are traffic and accident data – and physical inspections of an installations’ road network.

Team members identify many potential accident-prone situations. At Fort Campbell, Ky., a crosswalk was not conveniently located for pedestrian traffic, causing pedestrians to cross at an unsafe location. It was moved.

At Fort Story, Va., said Sumrak, a soldier was killed when his vehicle hit an old concrete retaining wall – no longer needed.

Installation officials ordered the wall removed at a cost of \$2,000.

“Removal of that retaining wall will prevent future injuries,” said Sumrak. “We calculate that it will save at least one life every 10 years.

“The surveys are extremely beneficial,” said Sumrak. “Many signs, pavement markings, signals, guardrails and road designs do not meet minimum safety standards.”

Since the program began in 1999, the team has visited 52 Department of Defense installations.

Their boss, Paul Allred, praises their work.

“I’m proud of them,” said Allred. “They save lives.”

“Our main focus is to get results.”

To augment the program, the agency is developing a computer-based CD that will provide basic traffic engineering training and guidance for Department of Defense employees.

Annually, there are 37,000 vehicle accidents on military installations that kill and injure thousands of people.

On installation site visits, Allred has his eye out for a particular situation: Army cannons or Navy ship anchors near roads or on medians.

“They sometimes are a traffic hazard,” said Sumrak. “We recommend that they be removed.”

Team members may be contacted at (757) 599-1170, DSN 927-4313, or traffic@tea-emh1.army.mil.

(CAPTION)

#009

Richard Sumrak displays the highway safety studies conducted by the MTMC Transportation Engineering Agency.